

HAWAII COUNCIL OF MAYORS

Testimony of the

Hawaii Council of Mayors
Bryan Baptiste, Mayor of Kauai
Mufi Hannemann, Mayor of Honolulu
Harry Kim, Mayor of Hawaii
Charmaine Tavares, Mayor of Maui

Before a Joint Hearing of the

House Finance Committee
Senate Ways and Means Committee

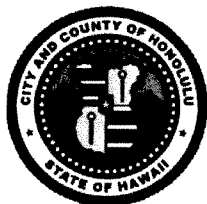
January 15, 2008

Mahalo for inviting us to testify before this joint hearing of the House Finance Committee and Senate Ways and Means Committee.

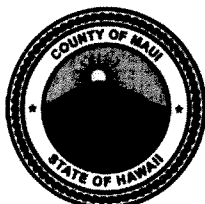
We established the Hawaii Council of Mayors as a roundtable to identify common public policy goals, exchange ideas, and collaborate on solutions to problems facing our counties. We have been meeting regularly to discuss our respective priorities and decided that one of our initiatives should be collectively approaching the members of the Legislature on legislation that addresses county concerns and stimulating a dialogue that should ultimately lead to more cooperation between our jurisdictions.

This year, in our talks on our legislative priorities, we adopted four priorities for our collective endorsement and your consideration. They are:

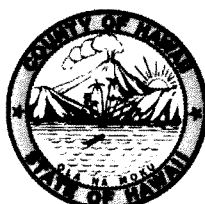
- homelessness,
- affordable housing,
- rehiring of retirees, and
- the HI-5 program.



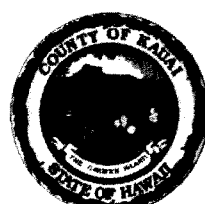
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Homelessness

Every county is experiencing homelessness. The scope or nature of the problem varies by county, but this much is clear: Many of the homeless are chronically homeless who require social services of a degree beyond the county governments' resources. We need more shelters and public housing so the homeless have somewhere to live, rather than on our streets and beaches.

We know the extent of the problem through our police, emergency services, housing, social service, and parks agencies. In December, we met with representatives of state agencies involved in addressing the needs of the homeless, to hear about their work and recommendations for legislative action. We believe you will have those before you, along with measures proposed by your colleagues.

We do not pretend to have the answers. However, we are united in our appeal to the members of this body to support measures that will enable the state to expand services to the homeless, repair and increase the inventory of public housing units, and stimulate the development of housing.

Affordable Housing

The lack of housing throughout the state is directly related to homelessness, as the absence of this housing, particularly in an overheated real estate market, is a contributing factor to the inability of many residents to find suitable homes. Again, the Hawaii Council of Mayors will stand behind proposals proffered by the Legislature and administration to increase funding for special funds that support the development of public housing and repairs to aging public housing projects.

We also believe that infrastructure construction costs can add to the price of a house, depending on the location. As such, perhaps the Legislature can revisit proposals to ease this burden by providing zero-interest loans to developers to underwrite infrastructure projects.

Rehiring of Retirees

The county governments continue to face a protracted workforce shortage caused by the retirements of baby-boomers and competition from the private sector and other jurisdictions for skilled workers. The shortfalls are acute in the construction-related occupations—engineers, inspectors, planners, and the like—and in our police force.

The counties are proposing that we be permitted to rehire retirees immediately upon retirement and with no employer contributions to the Employees Retirement System. We have met with the public employee unions and our preliminary discussions were favorable. We will work with them, should concerns arise.

HI-5

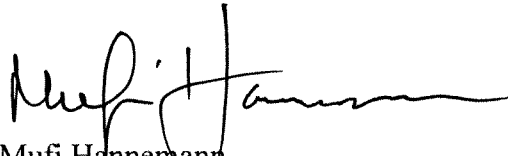
We are proposing that the HI-5 beverage container surplus deposit money now in state coffers, and all future surplus deposit revenue, be distributed to the counties to support our recycling efforts. The counties must dispose of recyclables that are not redeemed. The Neighbor Island county governments do not have enough redemption and recycling centers. The distribution of such surplus funds would be applied to supporting the expansion of county recycling efforts.

Each county will be seeking your support for legislation specific to our respective jurisdictions. However, these four priorities represent the collective efforts of the four mayors. We are eager to work with the members of the Legislature, on both houses and both sides of the aisle, to find common ground and support those measures that will produce tangible solutions to the challenges that we all face as public officials.

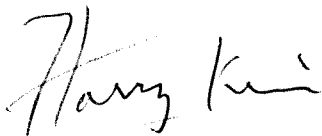
Mahalo for granting us the opportunity to testify.



Bryan J. Baptiste
Mayor of Kauai



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